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ABSTRACT

This report analyzes "vertical transfer," (or student transfer from two-year to four-year institutions, patterns in the United States. The paper explains the importance of this transition and highlights the strategies that are being employed to facilitate the transition, in addition to describing how both two- and four-year institutions can benefit from attending to the transfer issue. The report states that more than 50% of all first-year college students attend two-year institutions. In addition, student enrollment at two-year institutions is increasing at a faster rate than at four-year institutions. However, students who begin college at two-year institutions earn 15% fewer bachelor's degrees than do students who begin at four-year institutions. Nationally, since the 1970s, the number of students transferring from two- to four-year colleges has decreased relative to the total community college enrollment, despite the fact that 57% of community college students earn at least 60 semester hours of credit. The transfer rate of students in vocational-technical programs has been found to equal or exceed that of students who are in general education (transfer track) programs. This calls into question the validity of drawing distinctions between students on transfer and nontransfer tracks. (Contains 69 references.) (NB)

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THE TRANSFER TRANSITION: STUDENT ADVANCEMENT FROM 2-YEAR TO 4-YEAR INSTITUTIONS

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THE TRANSFER TRANSITION:
STUDENT ADVANCEMENT FROM 2-YEAR TO 4-YEAR INSTITUTIONS

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Introduction

The focus of this manuscript is on student transfer from 2- to 4-year institutions, known as "*vertical* transfer," which may also be viewed as a form of educational *advancement* from achievement of undergraduate certificates and the associate degree toward completion of the baccalaureate degree and possibly postgraduate education. The first section explains *why* attention to this transition is of *contemporary importance*, the second section highlights *what* specific *strategies* are being employed to facilitate this transition, and the concluding section describes *how* 2- and 4-year institutions may both *benefit* from attending to this issue.

THE *CASE FOR* CAREFUL ATTENTION TO THE TRANSFER TRANSITION

1. The *number* of potential two- to four-year college transfer students in American higher education is *sizable and growing*.

◆ More than 50% of all first-year college students attend two-year institutions (California Community Colleges, 1994; Parnell, 1986), and student enrollment at 2-year institutions is increasing at a faster rate than it is at 4-year colleges and universities (National Center for Educational Statistics, 1993).

◆ Simply stated, more 2-year college students will have the potential for making the transition to 4-year institutions than at any other time in our nation's history (Giles-Gee, 1994).

2. There is a significant *gap* between the number of students who enter 2-year colleges with the *intention* of transferring to 4-year institutions and the number who *actually* do.

◆ Students who begin higher education at 2-year colleges with the intention of achieving a baccalaureate degree will receive, on average, 15% fewer B.A. degrees than those who enter higher education at 4-year institutions, even when controlling for students' SES background, academic ability, high school achievement, and educational aspirations at college entry (Astin, 1975, 1977, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991).

During the 1980s, 75% of full-time first-year students in public community colleges indicated a desire to obtain a bachelor's degree—however, the actual transfer rate ranged from 15 to 25 percent; overall, no more than 20-25 percent of community college students who aspired to earn

a bachelor's degree ever did so (Pincus & Archer, 1989). This disturbing discrepancy has been referred to as the "baccalaureate gap." (American Council on Education, 1991)

> The research published in the last two decades has consistently found—even after holding constant a variety of relevant personal, academic, and family background characteristics and when studying only students in "college transfer" programs—that students entering a four-year institution are substantially more likely than two-year college entrants to persist in their education, to complete a baccalaureate degree, and to attend graduate or professional school (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, p. 641).

◆ Approximately one-half of all students who attend community colleges with aspirations to attain a baccalaureate degree will actually make the transition to 4-year institutions—with or without an associate degree (American Council on Education, 1991; Pincus & Archer, 1989; Watkins, 1990). In a study conducted under the auspices of the U.S. Department of Education, Pascarella and Terenzini tracked students in five community colleges over a two-year period and compared how they changed relative to students at four-year institutions. These researchers found that community college students were more likely to lower their degree aspirations after college entry than did students at four-year institutions. Reflecting on possible explanations for the finding, Pascarella (1997) offers two possibilities: "We don't know if the reason for the result is that two-year colleges 'cool out' degree aspirations or that students entering two-year colleges are more likely to have unrealistic expectations which become more realistic at the end of two years" (p. 4).

◆ Nationally, since the 1970s, the number of students transferring from 2-year to 4-year colleges has decreased relative to the total community-college enrollment (California Community Colleges, 1994), despite the fact that 57% of community college students earn at least 60 semester hours of college credit and 75% earn four or more semester hours of credit during their 2-year college experience (Palmer, Ludwig, & Stapleton, 1994).

In a joint report published by the Texas Association of Junior and Community College Instructional Administrators and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, academic and student support leaders in the state's community-and-technical college system concluded that, "There are noteworthy discrepancies between the factors that currently exist and what should exist at the two-year institutions to ensure transfer success of students" (Timmerman & Cook, 1995, p. 140).

◆ The transfer rate of community college students who are in vocational-technical programs has been found to equal or exceed that of students who are in general education (transfer-track) programs (Prager, 1988).

These results call into question the validity of drawing strong. distinctions between community college students as being on either "transfer" or "nontransfer" tracks (Harbin, 1996). The findings suggest that the baccalaureate degree aspirations of community college students are quite malleable and amenable to alteration through institutional interventions, and transfer education may need to be the focus "for all students, regardless of academic track" (Prager, 1988, p. 2).

This observation is reinforced further by findings which indicate that substantial numbers of two-year college students in terminal degree and certificate programs go on to enroll for additional postsecondary education following completion of their program (Pham, 1991; Rice & Beckmann, 1995; Woodman, 1995). Such findings lead Dorothy Knoell, former chief policy analyst for the California Postsecondary Education Commission, to recommend that, "The success of the transfer function should not be judged by volume or rates of transfer but, instead, by movement toward a vision of a future in which individuals who have successfully completed two years of postsecondary education or its equivalent will have an appropriate opportunity to continue their education toward a higher degree" (1996, p. 63).

◆ Workplace projections indicate that the majority of all new jobs in this country during the 21st century will require some type of baccalaureate preparation (Arciniega, 1990; Johnson & Packard, 1987).

◆ Students who transfer from two- to four-year institutions to complete their baccalaureate have been found to achieve comparable economic benefits as students who start and finish at four-year colleges—for example, it has been found that they earn comparable salaries and report similar levels of job satisfaction (Pascarella, 1997; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991).

3. Attention to closing the "transfer gap" between 2- and 4-year institutions has great potential for promoting *underrepresented* students' *access* to, and *achievement* of the baccalaureate degree.

◆ Disproportionately large numbers of underrepresented college students attend *community* colleges. Approximately 50% of all minority students begin higher education at 2-year institutions (Carter & Wilson, 1995; Levitz, 1992), despite the fact that they represent less than 25% of all students in American higher education (American Council on Education, 1994).

◆ The majority of first-generation college students begin higher education at 2-year institutions (Rendon, 1995; Richardson & Skinner, 1992), and are overrepresented at these institutions (Striplin, 1999). More first-generation ethnic and racial minority students are enrolled at community colleges than at all of our nation's 4-year colleges and universities combined (California Colleges, 1994).

◆ The number or ethnic and racial minority students (i.e., Blacks, Hispanics, and Native Americans) who *begin* higher education at community colleges is increasing. Two developments are contributing to this trend:

➢ *Demographic* projections indicate that minority students will be comprising a *larger proportion of high school seniors* in the next two decades. For example, in 1950, non-Hispanic whites represented approximately 85% of the under-18 population but, by 1990, their representation dropped to 69%; presently, 3 in 10 Americans under 18 years of age are minorities. If these demographic trends continue, non-Hispanic whites will comprise less than 50% of the population by the year 2020 or 2030 (Edgerton, 1991; Miller, 1995)

➢ *Cutbacks in scholarships and grants* have increased the number of minority students (who are disproportionately represented in low-income brackets) to enroll in less expensive community colleges (Mortenson, 1990). Reflecting on this finding, McPherson & Shapiro reached the following conclusion: "These data do seem worrisome. They suggest that the combined effects of tuition increases and limitations on federal student aid may be impairing the ability of low-income students to gain access to institutions other than community colleges" (1995, p. 29).

◆ The transfer (access) rate of minority students from 2- to 4-year institutions is significantly lower than that for majority students (Angel & Barrera, 1991), despite the fact that (a) the degree aspirations of minority students are very similar to those of majority students (Center for the Study of Community Colleges, 1985; College Entrance Examination Board, cited in Richardson & Bender, 1987), and (b) the majority of first-generation students realize the importance of a bachelor's degree for upward mobility (London, 1996). Even at urban community colleges, at least half of the enrolled minority students entertain aspirations for the baccalaureate degree (Richardson & Bender, 1987). As Rendon and Garza note: "While community colleges have sought to find their niche in postsecondary education by concentrating on career-based education to prepare students to enter the job market, many educators are concerned that higher expectations should be set for students of color, particularly since minorities occupy few privileged positions in society in which undergraduate degree are necessary" (1996, p. 290).

◆ Four-year institutions are much more likely to sponsor minority recruitment programs and to market recruitment materials aimed at high schools rather than at 2-year colleges, even though the latter institutions often enroll higher proportions of minority students (Wechsler, 1989).

Moreover, four-year institutions typically place greater recruiting emphasis on academically-oriented, suburban 2-year colleges at which the percentage of minority enrollment is lower than at urban 2-year institutions. "As a result, the proportions of black and Hispanic students among transfer students at the junior level often fail to equal the proportions of these groups among first-time freshmen at the same universities." (Richardson & Bender, 1987, p. 197).

This is a particularly disturbing finding because minority students who have performed well at urban community colleges may represent a pool of transfer recruits who are relatively "safe bets" for persistence to completion of a bachelor's degree because they have already demonstrated their academic commitment and achievement beyond high school. This already-manifested display of postsecondary achievement is more likely to predict their future college success than traditional high school-to-college admission criteria–such as standardized test scores–which have repeatedly been found to be poor predictors of the collegiate performance of African-Americans (Crouse & Trusheim, 1988; Nettles, Thoeny, & Gosman, 1986), Hispanics (Keller, Deneen, & Magallan, 1991), and native Americans (Beaulieu, 1991).

◆ As of 1990, 25% of 25-29 year-old whites had earned baccalaureate degrees—twice the percentage of African Americans and Hispanics (Edgerton, 1995).

"Given the underrepresentation of minorities in the share of baccalaureate degrees earned and the fact that earning the bachelor's degree is to a large extent contingent on minorities successfully transferring from two- to four-year institutions . . ., the imperative to increase

transfer rates of minority students is a national concern" (Rendon & Garza, 1996, pp. 289-291).

◆ In contrast to white and Asian students, decline in unemployment rates for black and Hispanic students is not evident until the baccalaureate degree is attained (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991).

A study conducted by the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (cited in Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991) revealed that the unemployment rate of whites dropped progressively with increasingly higher levels of education; however, among African Americans and Hispanics, this inverse relationship between level of education and unemployment did not emerge until the baccalaureate level of education was completed. Thus, people of color derive greater relative occupational benefits from a bachelor's degree than do whites.

In their epochal review of more than 2500 studies conducted over a 20-year period, Pascarella and Terenzini reached the following conclusion:

> Among minority and economically disadvantaged groups, for whom the two-year college is the most likely point of entry into the postsecondary educational system . . . . It is a cruel irony, then, that while the incremental socioeconomic benefits of a bachelor's degree are greatest for these groups (compared to white or higher socioeconomic groups), the likelihood of their obtaining those benefits is lowest. Failure on the part of educators and public policymakers to acknowledge that two-year and four-year colleges do not lead to the same set of educational and economic outcomes and failure to act on that recognition will mean that unequal educational opportunity will continue, not in the opportunities to participate in higher education but in the opportunities to reap the full benefits of participation. It will mean the perpetuation of the very inequities in educational and social mobility the community college movement was intended to eliminate (1991, pp. 641-642).

4. *"Artificial barriers"* in college *policies and procedures* may be interfering with the smooth transition of transfer students from 2-year to 4-year institutions.

Barriers to successful transfer and smooth transition from 2-year to 4-year institutions include the following factors or conditions.

◆ The *Curriculum*

Curricular barriers to successful transfer include conditions that create confusion and difficulty with respect to transferability of courses from 2-year to 4-year colleges that are often byproducts of the following factors:

➢ The multiple missions of community colleges (e.g., transfer preparation, terminal degree programs and certificates, continuing education) necessitate the offering of a wide array of courses serving different purposes and clientele. Some or many of these courses may be *non-transferrable to 4-year institutions* (e.g., vocational/technical courses, continuing education courses, personal enrichment courses).

➢ No identifiable *transfer articulation officer* employed at 2-year or 4-year institutions.

- Curricular *rigidity* on the part of 4-year institutions, whose representatives may refuse to accept transfer courses other than those that are virtually identical to their own; or accepting transfer courses as elective credit, rather than credit toward general education or an academic major.

- Curricular *changes* made by 4-year institutions without consideration of their implications for potential transfer students, or without notifying 2-year "feeder" colleges.

- Inter-institutional articulation agreements *not adhered to by college deans or department chairs* at 4-year institutions.

◆ *Financial Aid*

Financial aid barriers interfering with smooth and successful transfer include the conditions:

- little or no *portability* of financial aid for students transferring from one institution to another;

- few or no *scholarships* earmarked specifically for transfer students;

- acceptance letters sent to transfer students *after financial-aid application deadline dates* have passed.

◆ *Admissions & Registration*

Policy or procedural barriers interfering with 2-year college transfer students' admission to and registration at 4-year institutions include the following:

- Requiring transfer students to take *standardized college-admissions tests* (e.g., SAT) regardless of the quality of their academic performance at the 2-year institution from which they are transferring.

- Completing transfer students' "transcript analysis" *after* they have already enrolled in their first-semester of classes.

- Requiring transfer students to *register* last—after all native students—including incoming freshmen; the result: transfer students are "welcomed" to the university with a long list of closed classes.

◆ *Student Housing & Residential Life*

Policy or procedural barriers employed by 4-year institutions that may inhibit transfer, or interfere with a smooth transfer transition, include the following:

- providing of little or no *on-campus residential opportunities* for transfer students;
- notifying transfer students of acceptance *after* campus housing application *deadline dates* have passed;
- considering transfer students' requests for on-campus housing *last*–after meeting the requests of all native students;
- providing little or *no special assistance* to transfer students in securing *off-campus* housing.

4. For students who do transfer, they are likely to encounter significant *post-transfer adjustment* difficulties during their *first term* of enrollment at 4-year institutions.

◆ The term "transfer shock" has been coined to describe the initial adjustment problems or culture shock experienced by 2-year college transfer students (Hills,1965). After transferring to 4-year universities, 2-year college students experience a different institutional culture–one that may be characterized as: (a) less personal or nurturant (Bauer, 1994; Phillippi,1990), (b) more research-oriented and less student-centered (Richardson & Skinner, 1992), (c) more likely to emphasize selectivity than equal access (Prager, 1988), (d) more likely to have higher academic expectations while providing less academic support (Kintzer & Wattenbarger, 1985), (e) more likely to assume that transfer students do not need special assistance because they have already had collegiate experience (Beckenstein, 1992), and (f) more likely to perceive transfer students as "interlopers" or "second-class citizens" (Astin, 1975; Lunneborg & Lunneborg, 1976; Wilcha & Smith, 1990).

◆ Students transferring to research universities have been found to experience the greatest amount of transfer shock, and they are more likely to be critical of their community college preparation than students transferring to comprehensive universities with a teaching focus (Richardson & Bender, 1987).

◆ Transfer students have an attrition rate at 4-year colleges that is 10-15% higher than native students (Astin, 1975; Fetters, 1977; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Among transfer students who do persist to baccalaureate-degree completion, the *time taken to complete* their *degree* is *longer* than that it is for native students (Menke, 1980, cited in Wecshler, 1989).

◆ Underrepresented students who transfer from 2-year to 4-year institutions have higher attrition rates than do transferring majority students (Richardson & Bender, 1985; Kocher & Pascarella, 1990). For example, among students attending inner-city community colleges who transfer to 4-year institutions, about one-fourth to one-third earn a baccalaureate degree within five years (Richardson & Bender, 1987). This may be due to general transfer adjustment problems, plus the fact that underrepresented students will likely encounter a 4-year college culture that is much less diverse than the community college culture from which they came.

◆ Transfer students also experience a decline in academic performance during their initial term of enrollment at 4-year institutions (Diaz, 1992).

This drop or "dip" in GPA experienced by transfer students during their first semester/term at a 4-year institution is more precipitous for students who transfer:

(a) *before* completing the sophomore year (House, 1989) or the associate degree (Keeley & House, 1993),

(b) *from* urban community colleges (Richardson & Bender, 1987),

(c) *to* more selective 4-year institutions; for example, students transferring to the California State University system experienced an average first-semester grade point drop of .27, while those entering the more selective University of California system experienced an average drop of .57 in GPA (California Community Colleges, 1984).

◆ If transfer students persist after an initial drop in academic performance, their GPA typically returns to a higher level in subsequent semesters—moving closer to their pre-transfer GPA (Diaz, 1992).

Research on transfer students indicates that their academic performance in upper-division course work eventually equals or exceeds that of native students (Cohen & Brawer, 1987; Phillippi, 1990; "Transferring Doesn't Hurt GPAs," 1992).

COMMON TARGET AREAS AND REFORM TACTICS FOR ADDRESSING THE TRANSFER-TRANSITION ISSUE

1. Curricular Strategies

The following strategies represent attempts to promote successful transfer via the curriculum.

◆ "Enriching" the community-college curriculum to facilitate successful transfer (e.g., offering more transferable "academic" courses).

◆ Offering a first-semester seminar or student-success course to proactively prepare students for successful transfer.

◆ Collaboration between 2- and 4-year institutions to develop articulation agreements that enhance the transferability of individual courses.

◆ Replacing traditional "course-by-course" articulation pacts between 2- and 4-year institutions with transfer admission agreements ("TAGS") or transfer admission programs ("TAPS") (a.k.a., "simultaneous," or "dual" admission agreements).

These are contracts signed by representatives from a 2- and 4-year institution which stipulate that if a transferring student has completed a prescribed general-education course pattern with a satisfactory GPA at the 2-year institution, she will be admitted automatically

to the 4-year college as an upper-division student (i.e., junior status) with "block transfer" of all general education courses previously taken at the 2-year institution.

- Co-registration agreements between 2- and 4-year institutions whereby potential transfer students at the 2-year college can enroll simultaneously in courses offered by the 4-year institution. For example, a 4-year college offers courses to nearby community college students, delivered on either campus, so that potential transfer students can obtain "advanced placement" credit.

2. Academic Advisement Services

The following are strategies for promoting successful transfer which focus on improving the visibility and quality of academic advising.

- Designation and preparation of specialized *"transfer advisors"* or *"transfer counselors"* at 2- year and 4-year institutions. For example, advisors of 2-year college students and 4-year college advisors or admissions counselors collaborate to recruit potential transfer students, particularly underrepresented students.

- Establishment of a *"Transfer Center"* or *"Transfer Resource Center"* to provide informational and advisory support for potential transfer students.

- Appointment of a *"Transfer Director"* or *"Transfer Coordinator"* to provide leadership for and management of a successful transfer program.

3. Transfer-Student Orientation & Support Programs

Carolyn Prager articulates clearly the need to complement administrative approaches to promote successful transfer with student-centered orientation and support programs:

> Students who transfer not only move from one academic level to another but also from one distinctively different institutional culture to another, usually to one that they describe as less nurturing than that of the community college. Therefore to improve transfer viability, *transfer education must go beyond the search for academic parallelism* in freshman and sophomore studies at the two- and four-year levels by including *intellectual, social, and cultural* preparation for the baccalaureate environment (1988, p. 2)(italics added).

Orientation and support programs for transfer students have centered around the following practices:

- "Summer Bridge" or "Summer Transition Programs" provided for transfer students during the summer intervening between the conclusion of their 2-year college experience and the beginning of their 4-year college experience.

- Pre-semester orientation programs provided by 4-year colleges for transfer students just prior to their first semester of classes.

- Peer Mentoring Programs: Students who have successfully transferred to a 4-year institution serve as peer models or peer mentors for incoming transfer students.

- Transfer-student orientation courses/seminars offered by 4-year institutions for transfer students during their first semester of enrollment. (A detailed case for offering such a seminar is provided below.)

*The **Case For** a Transfer-Student Seminar*

The number of students who remain enrolled continuously at the same undergraduate institution from entry to graduation is decreasing; more students than ever before will begin higher education at one 4-year institution and complete their undergraduate degree somewhere else (Mellow, 2000). This trend underscores the need to distinguish between institutional graduation (retention) rates and system graduation rates (Tinto, 1993); the former rates tend to underestimate the number of beginning college students who persist in higher education and eventually complete their degree—albeit not at the institution where they entered higher education (Adelman, 1998). Moreover, the pool of potential two-year college to four-year college transfer students is sizable and will continue to grow (National Center for Education Statistics, 1993). Simply stated, more 2-year college students will have the potential for making the transition to 4-year institutions than at any other time in our nation's history (Giles-Gee, 1994).

Given these trends, now may be a propitious time to expand the concept of freshman seminars to include transfer seminars for first-term transfer students. Like freshmen, transfer students are ***new*** students. Admittedly, they may know more than beginning freshmen about higher education, but they still know less about the institutional culture at the college they have transferred to than do native students of comparable standing. Transfer students' difficulty in making a smooth transition from one higher education institution to another is documented by the phenomenon of "transfer shock" or "transfer dip"—i.e., initial adjustment problems and dip (drop) in GPA of transfer students during their first term after transfer—relative to their GPA prior to transfer (Diaz, 1992; Hills, 1965).

Potential *Goals & Objectives* for Transfer Seminars at 4-Year Institutions

Transfer seminars could pursue the following goals, objectives, or intended outcomes.

(1) Familiarize transfer students with the educational experience they are about to encounter at their new institution and the differences/similarities between this "culture" and the one from which they have emigrated (e.g., community college, comprehensive state university, liberal arts college, or research university). This could include an introduction of transfer students to the new institution's mission, its distinctive purposes and programs, its expectations of students and faculty, its academic advising and support systems, and its academic vocabulary or language (e.g., special acronyms, abbreviations, and other institution-specific language that immigrating students may not have encountered at the institution from which they have emigrated).

The seminar might be *customized* to meet the different needs of transfer students who emigrate

from different institutions—e.g., "vertical transfers" who are moving from a 2-year to a 4-year institution, versus "lateral transfers" who are moving from one 4-year institution to another; and students who are transferring at different points in their collegiate experience—e.g., junior transfers vs. sophomore transfers). Customization could be achieved either by (a) offering special course sections specifically tailored to different types of transfer students, or (b) homogeneous grouping of students in class with similar background and points of entry into small-group clusters for class discussions and group assignments. (Note: The cross-institutional perceptions of transfer students that may emerge from such clustering procedures may serve a valuable assessment function, providing the receiving institution with a potentially valuable source of comparative information about its perceived strengths and weaknesses.)

(2) For *junior* transfers who typically enter with a declared major, the transfer seminar may serve the dual purpose of introducing (orienting) new students to the ***institution***, as well as the particular ***academic discipline and department*** representing their major field of study. The latter introduction could include *discipline-specific* expectations with respect to research skills, writing and referencing styles, study strategies, critical and creative thinking skills, overview of disciplinary methodology, epistemology and modes of inquiry—e.g., what types of questions are asked, how are answers found, what evaluative criteria are used to judge the validity of these answers. (Faculty guest speakers would be an ideal way to address these issues while simultaneously introducing and transfer students to faculty in their discipline).

Also, transfer students might profit from information on how the discipline is thematically or conceptually *organized* (fields/subfields, specializations, sub-specializations), and how/why courses are *sequenced* in the major field. These questions are rarely addressed deliberately and taught intentionally, despite the fact that research suggests that disciplines vary widely in their structure and function (Biglan, 1973), and the instructional goals of faculty vary more by academic discipline than by type of institution, professor's level of teaching experience, or any other variable investigated (Angelo & Cross, 1993).

In a way, the transfer seminar could accomplish the same objectives for junior transfers as so-called "pre-professional" or "discipline-based" freshman seminars that introduce first-year students to the professional field or academic major and fulfill a requirement in the major—e.g., Introduction to Engineering to freshman engineering students. (The National Center for The First-Year Experience & Students in Transition could provide you a list of colleges and universities which offer these types of freshman seminars.) Offering an introduction to the academic or pre-professional major for *juniors* would be consistent with the findings of a national study of faculty who felt that familiarizing students with the modes of inquiry characteristic of their field should not be covered in introductory general education courses but in upper-division courses designed for students majoring in the discipline (Stark, et al., 1988).

(3) Prepare junior transfer students for, and maximize the positive impact of, the *final year* of college. Such preparatory strategies could include proactive planning for the crucial *senior year* transition to postgraduate education or employment—e.g., "What can I do with a major in this field?" "What have other graduates from this institution done with a major in this field?" (Alumni or final-term seniors would be ideal as guest speakers or panel, presentations and discussions). Thus, the junior seminar could not only have the immediate benefit of increasing

student adjustment and survival during their initial semester on campus (an entry experience), it also could provide a preparatory foundation for a productive senior year (an exit experience)—e.g., by addressing such issues as (a) how to secure meaningful internships or undergraduate research experience, (b) test-taking strategies for improving performance on standardized postgraduate exams, (c) effective resume construction, (d) position location and evaluation strategies, and (e) strategies for identifying and applying to graduate schools—which may serve to elevate students' interest in or aspirations for continuing their education. Students could integrate their thoughts on these issues and create a concrete action plan or preparatory portfolio which might constitute the culminating assignment for the seminar. (See the attached file for an overview of senior year experience purposes and programs.)(For additional research/scholarship on the senior year experience and senior seminars, see Gardner, Van der Veer, & Associates [1998], and Henscheid [2000].)

This junior transfer seminar could be designed as a "rising junior seminar" that is offered to native students as well—which would benefit all juniors and help junior transfers become socially integrated into the existing student culture. In fact, just as one major objective of freshman seminars is to socially integrate new students, this objective may be considered to be a major one for transfer seminars. For example, linked courses and freshman interest groups (FIGs) which have been designed to ensure that first-year students enroll in, and travel together to the same set of courses as a learning community, could also be designed to build a learning community of transfer students. For instance, transfer students in the same major could register for a transfer seminar designed to introduce them to the major and co-enroll in a two other courses in their major field. One institution that has done this is the University of California at Davis, which has designed a "Transfer Student Fellows Program" (TSFP), whereby transfer students in Biology attend a pre-entry summer course in their major and, during the academic year, these students meet in a one-unit transfer seminar class that introduces them to the range of biological disciplines on campus—via presentations given by faculty and through a series of small-group activities that focus on student research and presentation. Thus, the seminar not only connects transfer students in the same major, it also connects these students with research apprenticeships in their major.

(4) For *sophomore* transfers who are likely to enter their transfer institution without a declared major, the seminar could focus on exploring potential majors, minors, and the relationship between these different fields of academic specialization and potential careers. The sophomore transfer seminar could also focus on issues relating to the *"sophomore slump,"* such as: (a) dealing with less institutional support than that which was provided during their freshman year, (b) moving from college initiation to incorporation, (c) moving from general education to academic specialization, and (d) moving from academic exploration to academic commitment and decision-making.

Pedagogy in the sophomore seminar could include (a) small-group learning experiences—to offset their usual heavy dose of large, lecture-laden general education courses, (b) exposure to upper-division students in different majors—e.g., via panel presentations, and (c) introduction to experiential learning activities, both on campus—e.g. student leadership opportunities, and off campus—e.g., service learning experiences which may serve as exploratory internships to test major and career interests. (For recent research on the sophomore slump and the sophomore year

experience that might be used to identify relevant course content for a sophomore transfer seminar, see Schreiner & Pattengale [2000]).

Conclusion

The transfer seminar appears to have great potential, yet very few institutions are even attempting to tap it. A survey of campus practices serving transfer students was conducted on the Transfer Year Experience (TYE) Listerv in the spring of 2000 and no institution specifically reported a seminar; about the closest approximation was a series of short programs or workshops (e.g., Eastern Illinois University, Washington State University). The results of this survey may be obtained from the National Resource Center for The First Year Experience & Students in Transition. Also, a comprehensive web site that contains information on transfer research and policies in Canada is offered by the British Columbia Council on Admissions and Transfer (BCCAT) (www.bccat.bc.ca).

Institutions that have reported offering a transfer seminar include the following: Oregon State University—offers 15-20 sections with an average class size of 12; the University of Kentucky—offers a transfer seminar that is team-taught by tenured faculty and student assistants; Florida State University—offers a transfer orientation course with a required service-learning component; The University of South Carolina—offers special sections of University 101 that are customized for transfer students (based on a student needs assessment issued on the first day of class); The University of Colorado at Colorado Springs—recently has developed a series of team-taught, interdisciplinary, 2-credit "transition seminars" offered on two weekends. Also, there are two faculty members at California State University, Los Angeles (Nadine Steinberg & Diane Vernon) who are in the process of writing a textbook to be used in transfer-seminar courses.

A major drawing card for getting faculty involved in the junior transfer seminar may be it's focus on the retention and advancement *upper-division students* in their particular *department or discipline*. Thus, there may be more self-serving motivation for faculty to get involved in transfer-student success than in freshman success.

To increase student buy-in and enrollment, the course could be offered as requirement for the major. If offered as an elective, student enrollment might be enhanced if the course is scheduled for the second half of the term because students may be more aware of their need for it at that point—by then they may be in the throes of the common "midterm slump" and "transfer shock" may be at its peak. Plus, if adjustment difficulties and academic "dip" cause transfer students to drop a course early in their first term, they may be able to add the transfer seminar to offset their lost units.

4. Faculty Involvement Practices

The following strategies for facilitating successful transfer emanate from what has been termed the "academic model." As Judith Eaton describes it, "The academic model assumes that faculty are central to transfer success. . . . Central to the strategy is academic collaboration among two- and four-year faculty at the departmental, disciplinary, and program levels in the development of curriculum content and expectations for student success" (1994, pp. 1-2).

Examples of this strategy include the following practices.

- Collaboration between 2- and 4-year college faculty to facilitate successful transfer.

  Examples of inter-institutional or "intersegmental" collaboration between these two sectors include (a) *visitations by 4-year college faculty* to 2-year institutions to promote students' interest in transferring and majoring in the faculty member's discipline, and (b) orientation/transition courses *team-taught by 2-year and 4-year college faculty*. A good illustration of the latter strategy is a program that has been developed by South Mountain Community College in Phoenix (AZ). This two-year college collaborates with its major receiver institution, Arizona State University, to offer a university orientation program which includes a three-credit course designed jointly by faculty at both institutions (Donovan & Schaier-Peleg, 1988).

- Collaboration between academic department/division chairs at 2- and 4-year colleges to promote transferability of pre-major courses and to develop discipline-based articulation agreements.

  As Margaret King notes: "Whenever possible, at both two and four-year colleges, we should encourage discussion among those responsible for course content to determine if, in fact, there are significant differences between courses and what can be done to resolve those differences. Often, simply by meeting one another and beginning to discuss concerns, barriers may be lowered (1994, p. 5).

- Faculty members serving as mentors for transfer students.

  For example, mentoring relationships can be established between 4-year college faculty and 2-year college students with the goal of facilitating a smooth transfer transition.

- Faculty development efforts at 2-year institutions designed to promote faculty behavior inside and outside the classroom that elevates students' educational aspirations and desire to pursue completion of the baccalaureate degree.

5. Institutional Research & Student Assessment

In its national policy statement on transfer education, the National Center for Academic Advisement & Transfer makes nine major recommendations for transfer, one of which states that 2- and 4-year institutions should establish "formal written transfer goals [and create] an institutional information system that will generate the data necessary to assess the progress toward those goals according to readily understandable definitions" (Eaton, 1992, p. 78). The following strategies are consistent with this recommendation.

- Developing systems for accurately assessing the *educational plans or objectives* of 2-year college students at *entry* and if/how these plans *remain stable or change* with subsequent college experience.

- Developing systems for successfully *tracking* transfer students who transition from 2- to 4-year institutions for the purpose of assessing their retention and academic performance—

without violating the Family Privacy Act (Buckley Amendment).

- Developing *accurate indices or measures of successful transfer* (e.g., acceptance rates, subsequent retention, academic performance, and time to graduation).

- Effective *entry testing and course placement* procedures for transfer students.

- Assessing differences in levels of *college satisfaction* and *gains in academic achievement* of transfer students relative to native students.

- Assessing the transfer rates of *student subpopulations* (e.g., vocational-technical track students vs. transfer-oriented students).

- Assessing the transfer and retention rates of students transferring as *majors in different academic disciplines* (e.g., Natural Sciences vs. Humanities).

- Assessing the *impact of new-student seminars (a.k.a., student-success courses) on 2-year college* students' likelihood of transfer to, and subsequent success at, 4-year institutions.

- Assessing the impact of *transfer-orientation courses or transfer seminars* offered at *4-year colleges* for transfer students (e.g., impact on transfer-student retention, academic performance, and time to graduation).

HOW *TWO-* & *FOUR*-YEAR INSTITUTIONS MAY BENEFIT FROM GREATER ATTENTION TO THE TRANSFER TRANSITION

- *For **Two-Year*** Institutions:

1. *Assessment of institutional effectiveness* would be enhanced via closer examination of transfer rates (e.g., via establishment of efficient "student tracking" systems and accurate indices of successful transfer).

2. More effective response by 2-year colleges to calls for *institutional accountability, quality, and performance-based funding* which are now being tied more closely to student *retention* and *transfer* rates, rather than total number of students enrolled.

3. Greater attention paid by 2-year colleges to promoting successful transfer would better serve the *economic prospects of its students*, particularly *underrepresented* students, whose numbers

are now disproportionately large at public community colleges–institutions which have historically served disadvantaged students as part of their egalitarian, open-access mission. Relative to certificate programs and associate degrees, the differential economic advantage associated with completion of the *baccalaureate* degree, is now increasing, and this relative economic advantage of the baccalaureate degree is greater for *underrepresented* students (e.g., African-American males) than it is for majority students (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991).

◆ For ***Four-Year*** Institutions:

1. Facilitating the transfer transition may also facilitate *enrollment management* by enabling these institutions to offset enrollment declines stemming from smaller numbers of entering high-school graduates, or from attrition of native students during their freshman and sophomore years.

   The rising costs of higher education are causing beginning college students to opt for the local community college as a low-cost alternative for the first two years of college, but these same cost-conscious students may be very willing to pay higher tuition for just two years of college—their final two years—at a four-year institution.

2. Interest in the transfer transition may encourage 4-year institutions to cultivate a new, *more diverse pool of potential applicants* who can contribute to the *diversity* of their student body.

   For example, prospective transfer students at community colleges tend to be more diverse with respect to race, ethnicity, SES, and age relative to the traditional recruitment pool of high-school applicants.

3. Greater attention to transfer students may stimulate 4-year institutions' development of new *recruitment* strategies designed specifically to attract *transfer* students from two-year institutions—particularly underrepresented students who populate public community colleges.

   For instance, selective 4-year colleges might be able to offer "deferred admission" to high-risk underrepresented students–often found in disproportionate numbers at community colleges—who would otherwise be rejected. These students can first demonstrate their academic capabilities and build their academic skills at a two-year institution, thus enabling 4-year institutions to effectively recruit and accept at-risk students without incurring the risk of early attrition and the expense of remedial or developmental education.

4. Interest in promoting successful transfer should stimulate *inter-institutional collaboration* with area community colleges and improve *university-community* ("town-gown") relations.

5. Attention to the transfer transition would encourage 4-year institutions to see transfer students as an *opportunity* (rather than a liability), resulting in their becoming *active* (rather than passive) recipients of transfer students—by intentionally designing programs to address institutional factors that may interfere with the successful transition, integration, and retention of transfer students.

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